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John Lathrop, jun^r. Oration.

AN
O R A T I O N,
PRONOUNCED
J U L Y 4, 1796,
AT THE
REQUEST OF THE INHABITANTS
OF THE
TOWN OF BOSTON,
IN
COMMEMORATION
OF THE
ANNIVERSARY
OF
AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

BY JOHN LATHROP, JUN.

BOSTON,
PRINTED AND SOLD BY BENJAMIN EDES,
Kilby Street.—1796.

233 e. 62.

*At a Meeting of the Freeholders and other Inhabitants of the
Town of BOSTON, duly qualified and legally warned, in
public Town-Meeting, assembled at Faneuil-Hall, on Monday
the 4th Day of July, A. D. 1796;*

V O T E D,

THAT the SELECTMEN be and hereby are appointed a Committee to wait on JOHN LATHROP, jun. Esq. and in the Name of the Town to thank him for the spirited and elegant ORATION this Day delivered by him, at the Request of the Town, upon the ANNIVERSARY OF THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA—in which, according to the Institution of the Town, he considered the Feelings, Manners, and Principles which led to that great National Event—and to request of him a Copy thereof for the Pres.

Attest,

WILLIAM COOPER, Town Clerk,



GENTLEMEN,

AS an apology for gratifying the wishes of my Fellow Citizens must be unnecessary and superfluous, I submit to their perusal the ORATION, which they heared pronounced, with kind and candid attention.

I am,

GENTLEMEN,

Your obedient and obliged servant,

JOHN LATHROP, jun.

JULY 5, 1796.

The Selectmen of Boston



A N

O R A T I O N,

IT is now acknowledged as a fact in political biography, that Liberty descended from Heaven, on the 4th of July, 1776.— We are assembled on this day, the twentieth anniversary of her advent, to sympathise in those pleasures which none but freemen can enjoy ;— to exchange those mutual congratulations, which none, but freemen can express.

THE first promulgation of the Gospel of Liberty, was the declaration of American independence. Her apostles, the venerable congress, whose mode of evangelizing, made many a Felix tremble, sealed the doom, and issued the death-warrant of Despotism. The measure of her iniquity was filled up : The decree was gone forth, and Americans were elected by God, to redeem from bondage, the miserable victims of arbitrary power. But it would have been of no avail, for them to publish
to

to the enslaved the beauties of Freedom, describe her charms, and urge the duty of possessing her, while they, themselves, were declared by an act of the British legislature, liable to be *bounden by the will and laws of that overbearing kingdom,* "IN ALL CASES WHATSOEVER." They *disdained* an inconsistency of character:—they presented the world with a glorious example by effecting their own emancipation. Yes, my fellow countrymen! You indignantly refused a base submission to the usurpation of Great Britain,—to the impositions of her parliament and the insolence of her ministry. After opposing reasoning and argument to her absurd pretensions and dignified remonstrance to her unjustifiable encroachments, the solemn appeal was made to Heaven—the sword was drawn, and the once inseparable tie of connection between the two countries, severed in twain. The mighty blow resounded through the universe. The nations of the earth were astonished—dumb with surprise or trembling with apprehension. The deep rooted thrones of aged monarchies were shaken to their centres. The bastiles of Tyranny, riven by the shock, reluctantly admitted the rays of hope to gladden the desponding hearts of their wretched tenants, and opened to their view a distant prospect of scenes illuminated with Liberty's full and perfect day.—

WHAT

AN ORATION.

WHAT were the feelings, manners and principles, which produced the great national event, the subject of our anniversary commemoration ? Sprung from an ancestry ennobled by their virtue and their bravery, and inheriting from their dauntless sires, that ardent spirit, that high-souled honor, which equally disdained a quiet submission to an insult or an injury, Americans could not disguise their abhorrence of that system of policy, which had for its object the increase of regal prerogative, and the consequent diminution of the privileges of the people. They had learned the nature of the rights of man, among the earliest rudiments of their education. That God never created a human being to be a slave, was in their opinion, an axiom so self evident, so sacred an article of natural and revealed religion, that it would have been blasphemy to have deemed it problematical. Convinced that all men are born free and equal, they never could comprehend the arguments adduced to support the pretensions of dignified descent or hereditary honor. They loved their natal soil, for it was subdued and cultivated by their fathers, the abode of all their hearts held dear, and congenial with the rapid and luxuriant growth of the towering oak of Independence.— What then were their feelings, when they were declared

declared slaves by the most insolent of all the decrees that ever emanated from the polluted source of usurped authority ? What their feelings when the advice of a CAMBDEN was rejected—when the eloquence of a CHATHAM, their immortal advocate, was unregarded by the infatuated projectors of American subjugation ? Such their feelings—as those which inspired the patriots of ancient days and the heroes of former times—impelled them to vengeance against tyrants and urged them to godlike achievements. Such as glowed in the authors of Roman and Grecian, of Belgic and Helvetic liberty—in the Catos, the Tells, the Nassaus, the Hampdens, the Adamses and the Washingtons, who have maintained and supported the rights of the people, and by preserving their freedom, given life its best grace and existence its brightest charm.

THEIR manners,—Americans ! May those manners and those feelings, which inspired the actions and were expressed in the conduct of the patriots of 1776, be exhibited in the deportment of our latest posterity ! They were incapable of dissimulation—they could not conceal their thoughts, nor did they blush to communicate to their sovereign, their sorrows and their fears.

They

They prayed for an alleviation of their burdens ; but they firmly contended that they ought not to be taxed by any political body, of which they were not a constituent part, and in which they were not represented. They petitioned, they argued, they remonstrated.—Their petitions were treated with silent contempt—their arguments were addressed to the deaf ears of pride and obstinacy—their remonstrances were construed into overt acts of treason, for which, they were sentenced to suffer the severest punishment that Cruelty could devise or Despotism inflict. Their manners, pure and unadulterated, were the strong language that expressed the sensations which agitated their bosoms. They unequivocally demonstrated their determined courage, and were dignified as the resolutions of their enthusiastic souls.—Enthusiastic ! Yes ! and it was a glorious enthusiasm, which inspired with one sentiment and one intent, more than three millions of brave men, and kindled those unquenchable flames, which melted the manacles of tyranny, and illuminated with lustre divine, an EMANCIPATED world !

SUCH feelings—such manners could have originated only from the noblest, the most uncorrupted and steady principles ; from principles founded in virtue, the criterion of whose excellence

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has been unerring Experience. Such, warmed the breast of him, who consecrated Utica to eternal fame, and who, when Cæsar had banished Liberty from his country, flew after her, to enjoy her blessings among the gods. Such, fired the hardy and valiant opposers of despotism, when the second Phillip of Spain, like the third George of Britain, forced a brave people to become free and independent by oppressing and endeavoring to bind them in chains.

THAT the best way for a great empire to tax her colonies is to confer benefits upon them, and that no rulers have a right to levy contributions upon the property, or exact the services of their subjects; without their own, or the consent of their immediate representatives, were principles never recognized by the ministry and parliament of Great Britain. Fatally enamoured of their selfish systems of policy, and obstinately determined to effect the execution of their nefarious purposes, they were deaf to the suggestions of reason and the demands of justice. The frantic, tho' transient energy of intoxicated rage was exhibited in their every act, and blackened and distorted the features of their national character. On the contrary, Americans had but one object in view, for in Independence are concentrated and condensed every

every blessing that makes life desirable, every right and every privilege which can tend to the happiness or secure the native dignity of man. In the attainment of Independence, were all their passions, their desires, and their powers engaged. The intrepidity and magnanimity of their armies,—the wisdom and inflexible firmness of their Congress—the ardency of their patriotism—their unrepining patience, when assailed by dangers and perplexed with aggravated misfortunes, have long and deservedly employed the pen of panegyric and the tongue of eulogy.—Through the whole revolutionary conflict, a consistency and systematic regularity were preserved, equally honorable as extraordinary. The unity of design and classically correct arrangement of the series of incidents which compleated the epic story of American Independence, were so wonderful, so well wrought, that political *Hypercriticism* was abashed at the mighty production, and forced to join her sister *Envy*, in applauding the glorious composition.—

It is my pleasing duty, my fellow citizens, to felicitate you on the establishment of our national sovereignty; and among the various subjects for congratulation and rejoicing, this is not the most unimportant, that heaven has spared so many veterans

erans in the art of war, so many sages, who are versed in the best policies of peace; men, who are able to instruct and to govern, and whose faithful services, whose unremitting exertions to promote the public prosperity, entitle them to our firmest confidence and warmest gratitude.—Thank God! Uniting in the celebration of this anniversary, I behold many of the illustrious remnant of that band of patriots, who, despising danger and death, determined to be free or gloriously perish in the cause. Their countenances beam inexpressible delight—our joys are increased by their presence, our raptures are heightened by their participation. The feelings which inspired them in the “times which tried men’s souls,” are communicated to our bosoms. We catch the divine spirit which impelled them to bid defiance to the congregated host of despots; which, enabled them to dart the lightnings and hurl the bolts which their Franklin had wrested from Jove’s right hand, at their proud oppressors and ruthless foes. We swear to preserve the blessings they toiled to gain, which they obtained by the incessant labors of eight distressful years;—to transmit to our posterity, our rights undiminished, our honor untarnished, and our freedom unimpaired.

AFTER

AFTER encountering the combined force of European tyrants in the field, in 1783, the claims of America were acknowledged, and her requisitions complied with, by the *self-titled queen of the isles and mistress of the ocean*. Britain, humbled and exhausted—worn down with the burthen of an unsuccessful war, and bleeding with unnumbered wounds, yielded to the imperious control of necessity, and declared the thirteen United States to be free, sovereign and independent.—Columbia, reclined at her ease beneath the shade of her laurels! The roses of peace were interwoven with the wreath of glory that encircled her brows. The sword, which she had wielded in the cause of Liberty was committed to the hands of Agriculture, and furrowed the soil she had fertilized with the blood of her enemies. But the work was not accomplished: other labors were yet to be performed, other difficulties to be vanquished. During the critical time, when harmony of sentiment united the different States;—when they were all engaged in the attainment of their freedom;—when all their interests were involved in the event of the conflict and the success of their arms, the old system of confederation was adequate to the purposes for which it was instituted. But, when danger was over and the ardent passions which inspired every bosom with the generous

ous glow of sympathy and affection,—of manly courage and fraternal solicitude, had subsided, the situation of our country was discovered to be truly alarming. Having once suffered so severely from the rod of arbitrary power, the people were jealous, even of the rulers they had appointed by their own suffrages. But I will not enlarge on the scenes which followed, on that disastrous state of America, which was remedied alone by a political revolution, more wonderful than the fanguinary one, which effected her separation from Britain. The merchant recollects his dismantled shipping and his useless stores—the husbandman, the perished produce of his farms—the mechanic, how idle were his tools, how fatal his unavoidable leisure. The white pinions of Commerce were furled, and she wept at her inability to waft over the Atlantic's waves the luxuriant harvests of her sister Plenty. The debilitated confederation of the States—the inefficacy of a recommendatory system, where the obstinacy or envy of one inferior department of government “could put a negative upon the collected wisdom of the union”—the absolute weakness and nominal supremacy of Congress, were productive of uncounted evils, of continual jargon and perpetual feuds. And, upon minute inspection, the whole

whole structure of our national sovereignty—the temple where were to reside the power and dignity of the United States, appeared so feeble, built of such slight materials, so disproportioned in its form, and incompetent to the design of its erection, that it was pronounced unworthy the trouble and expense of alteration or repair. The decaying edifice was peaceably taken down, by consent of the people, and the majestic fabric of the Federal Constitution, reared in its stead. Sublimely towering to the heavens, its high dome concentrates the admiration and applause of all the kingdoms and dominions of the earth. Supported by its massive columns, it shall stand unshaken and uninjured, until in one general conflagration the great globe that we inhabit, shall be dissolved in the undistinguishable ruin of suns and of worlds!

AMERICANS could not hesitate in their choice of a chief magistrate. From the calm shades of Mount Vernon, called by the voice of his country, he, who was our cloud and pillar, during our pilgrimage and warfare, arose to govern and guard us in peace. Every heart beat with transports—every tongue hailed him welcome, thrice welcome!—Under his wise and unequalled administration, all ranks and degrees of our fellow citizens

citizens have been happy and prosperous. The lofty pyramid of American glory has been completed. As our struggles for freedom were unparalleled in their force and success, so our sense of its value has been estimated and proportioned. We have secured it by the best constitution, that ever was devised by the wisdom of man; we have defended it as well from foreign invasion as from the more dangerous attacks of domestic ambition. And although a few aspiring and discontented Exotics, have sounded the alarm and rung dismal peals upon the Tōcsin ;—the real friends to their country, have remained easy and unappalled, grateful to God for their numerous blessings, and industriously labouring in the city and the field, to deserve and be favored with a continuance of them. And though ingratitude has dared to impeach the most inflexible integrity ;—though disappointed ambition has emitted all its venom to blacken the fair reputation of unspotted virtue ; though the best intentions have been misrepresented and the noblest motives ascribed to viler purposes than ever were conceived by a Clodius or a Cataline, the confidence of the AMERICAN PEOPLE can never be removed, nor their affections diverted from their long tried, their long loved WASHINGTON.

At

As Americans we should be jealous of our national character; let us not present it to the world, colored with the mottled appearance which will be given, by division of feelings, difference of manners and a servile submission to any foreign influence. We have a right—a right dearly purchased—a right, which we ought sooner die than relinquish, to act, speak and think for ourselves. Possessing resources inexhaustible, we can command the wealth of other countries to flow into our own depositories. Our long extent of sea coast indented with capacious bays and numerous harbors;—our unmeasurable interior territory intersected with navigable rivers and fertilizing streams, ensure success to the enterprize of Commerce, and an abundant reward to the labors of Agriculture. In what region of the globe has not our constellated flag been borne? It has been displayed in Boreal blasts, it has been fanned by the gentle breezes of milder climes.

INTELLIGENCE is the soul of Liberty. Impressed with a due sense of this important truth, our ancestors instituted seminaries of learning, and engrafted the scions of literature, on their political constitutions. The venerable walls of Harvard, are monuments to their eternal honor. An American, who can neither read nor write, is

as rare a phenomenon as the visit of a comet to our hemisphere. Enlightened, honest, and independent, the citizens of our populous towns, the inhabitants of our villages and hamlets; act, reason, and determine for themselves, on subjects of the greatest moment, with such propriety, that the voice of the American people, may with justice be termed the voice of God: Let us then be Americans. Our alliance will be courted so long as we behave with that dignified reserve, which refuses, alike, to urge foreign intimacies when they are unnecessary, and the adoption of foreign principles and habits. Remote from the theatre of European contests, we may profit by their variances without involving ourselves in their wars: No one member of the great family of nations has a right to interfere in our domestic concerns, or to impose upon us partial, and particular obligations.—To France, we owe unbounded gratitude. When assailed by the tempests, and tossed by the rough billows of War, she burst in all the radiance of her power, upon our dreary situation, and illuminated our passage to the haven of Freedom.—Ah! Do we not pay the tributary sigh to the memories of those Gallic heroes who fell in our cause, or have been sacrificed, the victims of revolutionary rage in that country, for which, they would have cheerfully shed the last drop of their blood?

blood? Can we check the tear that Gratitude claims, when in mournful idea, we visit the dark dungeon of FAYETTE and listen to the clanking of his chains? But I forbear—France is at length free—View her rising from the glooms which had so long lowered around her—blackened her prospects, and eclipsed her glory, and splendid with the unbounded effulgence of Liberty!

FOR Britain, we feel anxious as patriots and as men. Her success would serve to increase the pride of her ministry, and strengthen the arm of royal prerogative. Her fall—would subjugate a brave people to foreign domination. Britons are valiant and enlightened; we respect their virtues, we love the amiable traits of their character, while, we lament the necessity of a reform in their whole system of government. Alas! The prospect of peace which so lately glimmered in the political horizon is vanished and gone! Again the lightnings flash, the thunders roll—and the tempest wildly rages over wretched Europe, its duration incalculable, desolating in its course, and resistless in its progress! May the guardian God of Columbia preserve our land from the ravage of the storm! and the fury of the conflicting elements!

To

To form a treaty with Britain, was an exercise of national right : The merits or demerits of that treaty, are subjects, which I do not feel myself warranted in considering on this day, when the hatchet of Party should be buried, when fraternal love, and congeniality of feeling, ought to glow in every bosom, and brighten every countenance. May its effects be propitious to our commerce ! May the conviction that the dictates of *Prudence* are infinitely more worthy of observance, than those of *Resentment*, induce an universal acquiescence in the proceedings of our constituted authorities !

AMERICANS !

To preserve, to perpetuate the independence of our country, is the duty, not only of our civil rulers, but of every individual. Much depends, frequently, upon the exertions and designs of a single member of society. The fate of Empires has been decided by an aspiring demagogue, or an ambitious hero !

INTRIGUE and Faction, are the instruments which designing and artful men employ to produce the destruction of good government, and the

the consequent annihilation of order and of law. When those infernal agents, are at work, he who bellows loudest for Liberty, intends to be the tyrant in chief. Let us be jealous of those Sempronii—unmantle their nefarious intentions, and convince them of the fallacy of their hopes to effect their purposes in the midst of an enlightened people.

THAT a well-regulated militia is necessary to protect our freedom and our happiness; to guard the temple of Justice from the outrages of the lawless and abandoned, and to wreak the vengeance of an insulted and powerful nation upon the insolent invaders of our soil, is a truth too generally acknowledged, to require any support from argument or from eloquence. Our brave and hardy yeomanry, strong and vigorous, compose an army, whose force would be as irresistible, as their hatred of tyrants is unconquerable. Disciplined and patriotic—their soldierly appearance would make the slaves of Hesse or Waldeck tremble, though those wretched hirelings have not sense to discern or respect the ardent virtue of their dauntless bosoms.

AMERICA,

AMERICA, the birth place of Liberty, the trophyed abode of victory, the only and fairest residence of Peace—the asylum of the oppressed,—presents to the world an object for admiration,—to superior beings a subject for applause.—Independent and free—she is subject to no extraneous control—but, preserving her equal neutrality and persisting in her dignified refusal to enlist under the banners of either of the parties which have made Europe but an ample *aceldama*, she has pursued that system of policy best calculated to ensure her own happiness and advantage, without giving cause of offence to any of her foreign connections or violating her public engagements.—May her peace, like her glory and freedom, be perpetual !

ON the last page of Fate's eventful volume, with the raptured ken of prophesy, I behold COLUMBIA's name recorded ; her future honors and happiness inscribed.—In the same important book the approaching end of Tyranny and the triumph of Right and Justice are written in indelible characters.—The struggle will soon be over—the tottering thrones of Despots will quickly fall and bury their proud incumbents in their massive ruins !

THEN

Then Peace on earth shall hold her easy sway,
And man forget his brother man to slay—
To martial arts, shall milder arts succeed ;
Who blesses most, shall gain the immortal meed.
The eye of Pity shall be pain'd no more,
With Victory's crimson banners stain'd with gore.
Thou glorious æra come ! Hail blessed time !
When full-orb'd Freedom shall unclouded shine,
When the chaste Muses cherish'd by her rays,
In olive groves shall tune their sweetest lays—
When bounteous Ceres shall direct her car,
O'er fields now blasted by the fires of war—
And angels view with joy and wonder join'd,
The golden age return'd to bless mankind !



